



NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA



**CENTRE FOR
CHILD RIGHTS**

**THE
BI-MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER**



April-May 2025 (CCR 10th Anniversary Special Edition)

Preface

We are honoured to present this special edition of our bi-monthly newsletter, marking the 10th anniversary of the Centre for Child Rights (CCR) at National Law University Odisha. This milestone is a testament to a decade of dedicated research, advocacy, and policy engagement in the field of child rights. It is a privilege to share this issue in the esteemed presence of distinguished dignitaries who have been instrumental in shaping the discourse on child welfare and protection.

This edition delves into pressing contemporary issues in the realm of child rights, covering critical topics such as sexual harassment against children, child labour, war crimes affecting children, and developments in juvenile justice.

As we commemorate this significant milestone, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue and driving actionable change. Your engagement and feedback remain invaluable in strengthening our collective efforts to ensure a world where every child's rights are protected, upheld, and prioritized. We look forward to your thoughts and collaboration in this shared mission.

Disclaimer & Acknowledgement

The Centre for Child Rights (CCR) expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the National Law University Odisha (NLUO) for providing a platform to think critically and engage meaningfully with the realm of Child Rights. This endeavour would not have been possible without the unwavering support of Prof. Ved Kumari (Vice-Chancellor of NLUO), Patron-in-Chief, and Prof. Rangin Pallav Tripathy (Registrar of NLUO). Prof. Biraj Swain (Chief Minister's Chair Professor- Child Rights and Director of Centre for Child Rights, NLUO) has been instrumental in shaping this vision from its inception, and her invaluable guidance has played a pivotal role in bringing this Newsletter to fruition.

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About Centre for Child Rights

Centre for Child Rights (CCR) is the specialized research centre of the National Law University Odisha, Cuttack (NLUO). The Centre was founded on April 12, 2015 with ceremonial inauguration by Hon'ble Justice Dipak Misra, former Chief Justice of India and Visitor, NLUO in the august presence of the Hon'ble Chief Justice and Judges of Orissa High Court, and Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Odisha. The Centre aims at building a rights temper amongst the children and the society, strengthening law and justice for children and child wellbeing by supporting and initiating research, policy advocacy and community action on children's issues. The Centre aims to provide integrated support and consultancy to different layers of institutional governance for protection and insurance of child rights, child protection, understand and reform enabling and disabling factors to furthering child rights and the inter-sectionalities.

Headlined by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ved Kumari, one of the foremost chroniclers of Juvenile Justice and everything Child Rights in the world, NLUO got its first ever Chair Professorship on Child Rights with a five-member staff team sanctioned by the Hon'ble CM of Odisha in 2023. This is led by the Chief Minister Chair Professor. This is the only fully functional chair professorship on child rights in the universe of National Law Universities across India.



UN CONDEMNS UNIMAGINABLE SUFFERING OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AT HANDS OF RUSSIA

AMIT KUMAR SAMAL

The Russia-Ukraine war has led to a growing humanitarian crisis, particularly affecting children. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) states that more than 50,000 people have reportedly gone missing over the past year due to the war. Apparently, Russia has yet to provide the Central Tracing Agency with detailed information on the missing children; hence, the parents have failed to trace their loved ones. This unwillingness to collaborate on humanitarian grounds causes suffering for the families, which could have been alleviated had they received the cooperation needed to assist.

The UN Human Rights Office reported that at least 600 children have been killed in Ukraine from February 24, 2022, to December 31, 2024, including some who were in territories occupied by Russia. Violence caused internal displacement for 737,000 children, while another 1.7 million fled the country as refugees. These shocking statistics reflect the extent of suffering confronting innocent civilians, especially children, who have either been separated from their families or have endured hardships of displacement. International humanitarian analysts express concern about the Kremlin's

refusal to pass any information about the whereabouts of missing children and accuse it of violating international humanitarian law. The ICRC and other groups are therefore urging both sides to make children a priority, facilitate family reunification, and give full details regarding the missing.

The war continues to claim lives, rob children of their future, push them into hazardous and vulnerable situations, and now seems far from an end. In light of this, international actors are calling for increased accountability and transparency standards to shield the populations from further humanitarian suffering. Explaining the tragedy of missing and displaced children is still a current priority internationally, given that thousands of families are still desperate for answers and justice.

JUSTICE DELAYED, JUSTICE DENIED: MARYLAND'S RECKONING WITH ABUSE IN JUVENILE DETENTION

AKSHAT PRAKASH



“Where was my first chance?” Arlando “Tray” Jones wonders, reflecting on a life marked by tragedy. His father was killed by Baltimore police during a robbery when Jones was a toddler. His mother died years later from alcoholism. Raised in poverty by struggling relatives, Jones turned to a drug dealer, “Fat Larry,” for stability. Violence followed, and at 13, he faced an attempted murder charge and landed in juvenile detention.

“They broke me,” he recalls. Jones says that, at the Maryland Training School for Boys, staff sexually assaulted him, beating him into submission. Now, he’s among thousands suing under Maryland’s 2023 Child Victims Act, which lifted the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse claims. Originally aimed at the Catholic Church, the law unleashed a flood of cases against the state’s juvenile justice system, straining its budget.

Jones’s story reflects that of many others. Nalisha Gibbs, abused in detention after a curfew violation, suffered further trauma in foster care. She fought back, earning a GED and rebuilding her life. Both say the system failed them and most black children, leaving them poor and vulnerable.

Lawsuits allege decades of statewide abuse, ignored despite reports like a 2004 Justice Department finding of “deeply disturbing” violence at Jones’s facility.

After detention, Jones went into a downward spiral. At 16, he killed a man in a drug dispute, resulting in a life sentence. Released in 2022 under a state law that allows sentence reductions for people convicted as children, he now works at Georgetown University, armed with a psychology degree and two published books. Education restored his humanity, he says, but the question lingers: Where was the help when he needed it most?

AMID PARENTS' PROTESTS, KARNATAKA CHILD RIGHTS PANEL SEEKS RELAXATION OF 6 YEARS AS AGE FOR CLASS 1 ADMISSION

ISHIKA BHATTACHARAYA



Substantial numbers of parents in Karnataka oppose the implementation of Karnataka National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's age requirement for Class 1 admission. According to the policy, all students must reach their sixth birthday by June 1st of the corresponding academic year to enroll in Class 1. The statewide directive issued in November 2022 prevents children who started pre-primary education under the previous system during 2021-22 academic year from continuing their educational progress. The educational population impacted by the new age criterion amounts to an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 students throughout Karnataka while Bengaluru city bears approximately 50,000 cases among its student body.

The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) answered parental dissatisfaction through a government letter that asked for modification along with flexible age requirements. Chairperson of KSCPCR K. Nagannagowda stated that the new policy had created massive confusion and displacement among students because easier enrollment requirements must be implemented. Lawmakers have embraced

this issue through multiple court cases. A petition presented to the Karnataka High Court by a female child at four years old received rejection when contesting the educational age restrictions. The state received judicial backing when the court stated that the new age system meets requirements from NEP 2020 for foundational learning programs starting in preschool. School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa has given a promise that the government will publish a notification to settle these matters during the following weeks. The upcoming announcement according to him, will prioritize student and parental interests to quickly conclude this matter. This is a reminder of the difficulties of putting through educational reform, particularly where this overlaps with parents' and pupils' expectations and intentions. Balancing policy goals with the operational realities of families continues to be a challenge facing policymakers.



OUR JOURNEY





SO FAR



CHHATTISGARH HIGH COURT DENIES BAIL TO JUVENILES INVOLVED IN MURDER CASE, CITES 'ENDS OF JUSTICE' CLAUSE

POORNA MISHRA



It is widely acknowledged that the judicial system tends to demonstrate a propensity for leniency towards juveniles in matters pertaining to bail privileges. However, the Chhattisgarh High Court, in one of its recent rulings, denied bail to two juveniles who were accused in a murder case. They had filed a revision petition in the High Court after being denied bail by the Juvenile Justice Board and the Additional Sessions Judge (FTC), Raipur.

Justice Arvind Kumar Verma pronounced that although bail for juveniles should typically be granted liberally and pragmatically, one must assess, on the merit of each case, whether their release could pose risks. The JJ Act, 2015, under Section 12, mandates an evaluation, to be recorded in writing, of the social investigation report to determine if a juvenile's release could expose him to danger- physical, psychological, or moral- or lead them to associations with criminals—all of which serve as dis-entitling factors for bail lest it defeats the ends of justice.

The Court noted that the juveniles were charged with conspiring and organising ransom for killers to eliminate their own Uncle and their Father.

The Probation Officer's report, relied upon by the HC, felt that the chances of the juveniles coming under the influence of other criminals were high. The HC felt that the juveniles could not be treated as being unaware of their actions, and the consequences thereof, of charges of the murder of their own family members through contract killing. The HC concluded that letting the applicants out on bail would indeed be a travesty of justice. Thus, the Revision Petition was rejected and the decisions of the JJB and the lower court were upheld.

DECLINE IN CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA'S INCENSE STICK INDUSTRY: A HOPEFUL TREND OR A PARTIAL PICTURE?

REYANSH THAKUR



A recent report by NGOs working in the child rights sector highlights a decline in child labour in India's incense stick (agarbatti) industry. This comes as a positive development, given the sector's past reliance on child labour due to its labour-intensive and home-based nature. The study attributes this decline to increased awareness, stricter enforcement of labour laws, and corporate responsibility initiatives. However, a deeper analysis reveals that while progress is evident, challenges remain.

Many children previously engaged in agarbatti rolling have shifted to other forms of labour, often in informal sectors that remain underregulated. The report also notes inconsistencies in enforcement, with certain regions still struggling to eliminate child labour. Additionally, economic hardships often push families to rely on children's earnings, making eradication a complex issue that requires both legal and socio-economic interventions.

While the reduction in child labour in the incense stick industry signals a step forward, the fight is far from over. Strengthening social security for

vulnerable families, improving access to quality education, and ensuring better rehabilitation for affected children are crucial next steps. Only a holistic approach can ensure that child labour elimination is not just industry-specific but a broader reality across sectors in India.

UNICEF REPORTS WIDESPREAD SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SUDAN

AMIT SAMAL



More than 221 children have reportedly been raped by armed men in war-torn Sudan since the beginning of the year 2024, this shocking information is revealed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). According to records by gender based violence service providers, over 66% of the survivors are girls, and the remaining are boys. Alarmingly, 16 victims were under five years old, including four infants. In addition, 77 incidences of attempted rape and sexual assault against children were recorded. The ongoing conflict between the Sudanese military and the rival Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has caused more than 20,000 deaths, uprooting 14 million people and throwing parts of the country into famine. UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell condemned the use of rape as a military tactic and termed it as a gross violation of international law.

The agency has documented incidents of children being raped during city attacks, including a boy having been forced to abuse animals under the threat of death in South Kordofan, and several children, including a six-year-old, forced to have sexual relations while picking fruit. The incidents reported were from Gadarif, Kassala, Gezeira, Khartoum, River Nile, Northern State, South Kordofan, North Darfur, and West Darfur.

Despite severe social stigma and threats of retaliation, some survivors have come forward; however, UNICEF warns that this is just a small fraction of cases. Many suffer from physical injuries and psychological trauma, and some have attempted suicide. The victims' sufferings were termed unimaginable and ongoing by UNICEF spokesperson Tess Ingram, who visited Sudan.

The agency called on the Sudanese government and all warring parties to protect civilians, particularly children, and called for international intervention to halt these atrocities. Russell strongly urged that rape on infants and children warrants urgent global action to bring the offenders to justice and protect vulnerable people of Sudan.

TEAM CCR

ADVISOR:

ANUJ KULHAR

MENTORS:

MADHULIKA TRIPATHY
AVISMIRTA SHYAMALI MISHRA

CONVENER:

DHRUV DHINGRA

Co - CONVENER:

ARADHANA NAYAK

SECRETARY:

SURAJ KUMAR MISHRA

JOINT SECRETARY:

JYOTIRMAYA CHOUDHARY

SOCIAL MEDIA:

PRIYANKA P DAS
KASHISH RATHORE

CURRENT EDITION

CONTRIBUTORS

AUTHORS:

POORNA MISHRA
AKSHAT PRAKASH
REYANSH THAKUR
AMIT KUMAR SAMAL
ISHIKA BHATTACHARYYA

EDITOR:

MADHULIKA TRIPATHY
PRAYAS DAS
ARANYA SEN

COMISSIONING EDITORS:

DHRUV DHINGRA
ARADHANA NAYAK

DESIGN TEAM:

KASHISH RATHORE
SUSHANT MISHRA
AKSHAT PRAKASH
SHIVANSH BOHRA
DHARUN R.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION:

ABHINANDAN
POORNA MISHRA
AMIT KUMAR SAMAL
ISHIKA BHATTACHARYYA

EVENTS & LOGISTICS:

KRITI JAIN
SHEHNAZ NAJM CHOWDHURY

MEMBERS:

SRITI BASU
AKSHAT PRAKASH
SUSHANT MISHRA
REYANSH THAKUR
BHARAT BHUSHAN TAYAL

FACULTY

PROFESSOR VED KUMARI
VICE-CHANCELLOR, NLUO
PATRON-IN-CHIEF,
CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS

PROFESSOR BIRAJ SWAIN
CHIEF MINISTER'S CHAIR PROFESSOR,
AND DIRECTOR OF CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS, NLUO

DR SWAGATIKA SAMAL
RESEARCHER
CCR TEAM MEMBER

DR PRADIPTA KUMAR SARANGI
RESEARCHER
CCR TEAM MEMBER

MR AMULYA KUMAR SWAIN
OFFICE ASSISTANT
CCR TEAM MEMBER

MR ANKIT KUMAR KESHRI
UNICEF CONSULTANT
CCR TEAM MEMBER

DR RASHMI REKHA BAUG
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LAW, NLUO
CO-DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS, NLUO

DR SHUBHANGINEE SINGH
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, NLUO
CO-DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS, NLUO



OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF CCR NLUO



CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS, NLUO



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